Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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A. Yes, Anything.

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"Processed chicken is no different than if you stuck it in the toilet and ate it."
USDA microbiologist to TIME magazine

The Fall of Ron Carey

The impact of Judge Kenneth Conboy's November 17 decision to disqualify Ron Carey from running for re-election as president of the International Brotherhood of the Teamsters has been electrifying. For many, the first reaction was, "Screw the Feds!" Somehow, Carey would fight the decision, appeal to a higher court, soldier on.

Others were quicker in accepting the bleak reality of Conboy's assessment of how $885,000 was drained out of the IBT treasury in two weeks in late October 1996, with $327,500 ending up in the pockets of Carey campaign consultants and the balance going to various public interest outfits working to elect Democrats.

"Hell," said one man who has been working on Carey's re-election team, "guys here have been fired for fudging their credit card expenses". Said another long-time union adviser to the Carey forces, "If you apply the standard of the Independent Review Board, the standard that has been used to remove nearly 200 people from the union by Carey, then Carey has to go". In the long months of Carey probes, amid all the tirades from enemies of labor such as the *Wall Street Journal* or Rep. Peter Hoekstra and his Republican colleagues on the Hill, many had persuaded themselves that somehow Carey had known nothing of the money shuffling. Indeed Judge Conboy's decision rests heavily on the refreshed memory of a man—Jere Nash, former Carey campaign manager—who has pleaded guilty to conspiracy and making false statements and who is now angling for a lighter sentence.

But that $885,000 was spent at time when the IBT had a negative cash flow, its net assets were down by half and political action was empty. As one Carey supporter said, "He had to have known. A guy like Carey would never be so fiscally irresponsible".

And yet such sober assessments sit side-by-side with outrage over the ability of a retired federal judge to deny union members the right to choose their own leaders. It's anger that's been simmering ever since the previous election officer, Barbara Zack Quindel, ordered a rerun of the Carey–Hoffa race despite Carey's narrow but convincing victory over James Hoffa, Jr. in December of 1996. Remember, there were no charges of ballot-tampering, vote-buying, intimidation of members, no evidence at all that the actual ballot was anything but the will of several hundred thousand Teamsters. "It's class justice," remarked one pro-Carey Teamster.

A double edge here is that the overwhelming power of federal regulation over the Teamsters has been used, indeed embraced, not only by Carey but by the reform faction, Teamsters for a Democratic Union. There are strong arguments for that TDU position, but it has come at a price.

All through the week after Judge Conboy's decision TDU had to steer between loyalty to Carey and the necessity of figuring a future in which Carey would no longer be the standard-bearer for reform. Among some the secret nightmare was that so long as Carey fought to stay, no one could come forward to take his place in the election. Already George Cashman, head of the

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Our Little Secret

Soros the Union Buster

The billionaire George Soros champions the cause of the downtrodden. Through his Open Society Foundation, presided over by Arieh Neier, formerly of Human Rights Watch, he donates $350 million to charities per year. Soros's pet causes include schooling for Eastern European gypsies, a ban on landmines and revitalizing the inner city.

As is so often the case with billionaire philanthropists, Soros is far less enlightened when it comes to protecting his own portfolio (which once held landmine stock). Along with Whitehall Realty, a division of Goldman, Sachs, Soros is co-owner of two buildings in the suburban Denver area. The buildings are cleaned by Maintenance Unlimited (MU), a firm that exclusively employs Central American immigrant employees. Workers—some as young as thirteen—receive no benefits and are paid about $5.25 per hour.

For the past year, Local 105, affiliated with the Service Employees International Union, has attempted to organize workers in the Denver suburbs. With the exception of MU, the largest cleaning contractor in the area, the cleaning firms have not interfered with organizing efforts.

The National Labor Relations Board has issued three complaints, covering dozens of charges of labor law violations against MU. The charges range from threats against workers to firing pro-union employees. The NLRB also found that MU has rewarded workers who refuse to speak to union organizers with paid time off. Union organizers were thrilled when they heard Soros was co-owner of the building. His Emma Lazarus Fund has given $50 million to groups that support immigrants' rights, and lists among its funding priorities help for "individuals who have been adversely affected by welfare reform". Local 105 officials were confident that after talking with them, Soros would follow the lead of the California Public Employees Retirement System, the largest pension fund in the nation, which dropped its shares in MU after learning of its anti-union activities.

But despite pleas from union organizers, officials at The Open Society and other Soros-linked organizations have refused to take action. Last summer, Julie Gozan of the SEIU in Washington wrote a letter to Michael Nelsen, director of real estate at the Soros Fund, asking that Soros consider replacing MU unless it changed its practices. Nelsen replied that Soros had a large real estate portfolio and did not handle day-to-day operations. Hence, "it would be impossible for Mr. Soros to deal with any of the individual property management issues of the buildings in question or with regard to any other buildings in the portfolio".

Mitch Ackerman, a local SEIU organizer, said the union had hesitated to go public with Soros's involvement with the two buildings but has now given up in frustration. "We thought: Great, he's a good guy and we'll be able to work with him", he tells us. "We've tried to work with him for almost the past year and we never even got close." Newspapers in the Denver area have been told the story, but thus far haven't printed a line.

Shintech's Secret Backer

One of the shadiest players in the Shintech scandal down in Louisiana turns out to be Edward Lupberger, an old pal of Bill Clinton and Mack McLarty. Lupberger is CEO of Entergy, the New Orleans-based energy conglomerate that owns Arkansas Power and Light and which has reaped two billion-dollar power plant deals in Indonesia with the Lippo Group, brokered by that titan of global trade, Ron Brown.

Shintech, you will recall, is the Japanese chemical giant planning to build the world's second largest polyvinyl chloride plant near the black community of Convent in the heart of Cancer Alley. Just when the Shintech plant seemed a sure thing, enter the Tulane University Environmental Law Clinic, a largely student-run operation which filed an environmental justice complaint with EPA on behalf of Convent residents. The first-of-a-kind petition charged that EPA should deny Shintech an air permit because toxic emissions from the factory would disproportionately harm poor folks and people of color.

This act of defiance has enraged Louisiana's millionaire governor, Mike Foster, who has gone after the law clinic. Foster raged that he would revoke the university's tax status, demanded that clinic lawyers be investigated for "barratry" (vexatious incitement to litigation) and urged the mighty New Orleans Roundtable to suspend contributions to the university until the law clinic is brought to its knees.

Among the Roundtable audience of Louisiana's most puissant tycoons was Ed Lupberger, who urged the business group to send a series of letters to the Louisiana Supreme Court demanding

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that the justices investigate the clinic. One of the letters called the clinic "anti-business" and complained that "the faculty and students [have] an unrestricted right to use the court rules to fight, harass and interfere with Louisiana's interest to attract new business". On October 15, the court informed clinic director Bob Kuehn that an official probe had been launched in response to the complaints. Kuehn bristles at the investigation, saying, "The governor asked his business buddies to do something about Tulane. Well, now they have done something about Tulane."

Lupberger and Foster have also successfully toiled to win the support of Ernest Johnson, head of the Louisiana chapter of the NAACP. Johnson's support was useful in the Foster's scheme to discredit the law clinic. Hours before Johnson endorsed the Shintech plant last August, a nonprofit group he headed was awarded a $2.5 million state grant. To qualify for the grant, Johnson's group, CAPFUND, needed to demonstrate it had other sources of financial aid. It was then that Lupberger's Entergy kicked in $100,000 to CAPFUND.

Why would Ed Lupberger go to such lengths to rescue a Japanese chemical company? Yes, it turns out that the 2,400-acre Shintech site on the Mississippi River is owned by...Entergy! For the last year, Shintech has had an option to buy the property (valued at more than $4 million), but the land sale is contingent upon Shintech getting approval for all of its zoning and environmental permits.

Nike's Political Science

Phil Knight, Nike's billionaire boss, likes to think of himself as an industrialist with a global vision, the Henry Ford of cross-trainers. In recent public appearances, Knight has taken to describing his company as "a civilizing force in underdeveloped nations, such as China and Indonesia". A job at a Nike factory, Knight argues, should be viewed as a kind of internship, the skimpy paycheck a passport for a better future. "We give people a chance to work themselves out of poverty," Knight professed. "When their bellies are full and they've got a roof over their heads, only then can they think about changing their government." (As a lesson in the new global economy, Knight's company charges its workers for drinking water.) "Nike is US foreign policy in action", Knight wrote in Nike's 1996 annual report.

The intent of Nike/US foreign policy is starkly spelled out in an April 9, 1997, report that has fallen into **CounterPunch**'s hands. It was issued by Jardine and Fleming, one of Hong Kong's largest investment houses. The Jardine and Fleming report is titled *Tracking Nike's Footprints Across Asia*. The Jardine and Fleming report emphasizes:. "If we delve deeper into where Nike has produced sneakers and its comments about political stability, we notice that Nike tends to favor strong governments. For example, Nike was a major producer in both Korea and Taiwan when these countries were largely under military rule. It currently favors China, where the Communists and only two men have led the country since 1949, and Indonesia where President Suharto has been in charge since 1967...Likewise, Nike never did move into the Philippines in a big way in the 1980s, a period when democracy there flourished. Thailand's democracy movement of 1992 also corresponded to Nike's downgrading of production in that country."

"Nike is US foreign policy in action", declares Phil Knight, who charges his workers for drinking water.

When democracy rears its head, Nike takes a hike. Political dissent inside China, where Nike produces more than one-third of its shoes, is starting to give the company a headache. "People are always talking about human rights and welfare," complains Allen Lee, who manages a Nike plant in China. "In 1989, people never did that. That was my golden time. No one squeezed me." The report notes that "Nike management found that it was very hard to make sneakers in America, primarily because of much higher labor costs and more stringent labor laws". The report said employment in Nike factories calls for "miserable repetitive work" that is unsuited for developed nations.

Nike's chief flack, Vada Manager, bizarrely included this analysis in a press kit delivered to the editors of college newspapers on campuses where protests against the company have begun to endanger lucrative sports shoe deals.

Andy's Safe

Among the cost cutting "reforms" promulgated by Defense Secretary Cohen and dissected on page 5 of this issue is the proposed eviction of the ancient pork-seeker Andrew Marshall and his 10-man Office of Net Assessment from the Pentagon to the Siberia of the National Defense University.

CounterPunch readers may recall our story on him. The news brought howls of execration from Marshall's claque, including Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal*. Gigot should relax. Like the rest of Cohen's initiatives, there's nothing to it. Marshall will physically remain in his Pentagon lair. His relocation to the NDU is purely bureaucratic so that Cohen can claim a "manpower reduction" in Pentagon numbers. ■

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Gun$, Nut$ & T 'baccy:

Fast Track Deals & Bill's Principles

When battling to win passage of the NAFTA trade deal in 1993, President Clinton shelled out an estimated $50 billion in bribes to members of Congress, said bribes coming in the form of bridges, roads, tax breaks, warplanes and related pork barreling. Since it never came to a vote, a comparable tally for the doomed bid to win approval for fast track will never be known. But here at **CounterPunch** we've been totting up all the amazing offers to fast track holdouts, including a tentative vow to repeal the 14th Amendment.

More than 10 California lawmakers pledged their votes after US trade rep Charlene Barshevsky promised to press Mexico to reduce its tariffs on imported wine. The chief beneficiary of this deal was Republican Rep. George Radanovich, Congress's only vintner and an eager ally of the liquor lobby.

To lure votes from Georgia and the Florida panhandle, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman promised to support American peanut growers by spending more money to promote US exports and to find ways to restrict imports of peanuts from Latin America. Rep. Earl Pomeroy and Senator Tom Daschle, both of South Dakota, were promised an investigation into Canadian wheat price supports and action to protect American cattle ranchers from imports of Canadian and Mexican beef.

Representative Al Mollohan, a West Virginia Democrat who prides himself on his redneck roots, said he would vote for fast track if the Administration would make it easier to import used M-1 rifles into the US. Though Clinton has opposed the import of semi-automatic assault weapons, the White House lobbyists were apparently prepared to make an exception to secure Mollohan's vote. The measure was intended to aid the Gibbs Rifle Company of Martinsburg, West Virginia, a leading gun importer. In a similar deal to bail out a hometown company, Rep. Mac Collins of Georgia sold his vote for a promise from the White House to press Japan at the upcoming APEC conference to loosen its restrictions on investments by US-owned insurance companies. Collins was acting on behalf of the American Family Life Assurance Company which maintains policies on 30 million people in Japan.

Clinton offered to trade away part of the 14th Amendment to buy the vote of a dim-witted surfing congressman, Brian Bilbray.

The ultimate bargaining chip used by Clinton was the 14th Amendment, which, among other things, gives citizenship rights to anyone born in the United States. That provision is opposed by anti-Latino groups. They claim that pregnant Mexican women come across the border to deliver their babies, thereby gaining the right to residency for their tots. Rep. Brian Bilbray, a dull-witted member of Congress best known for his surfing ability, is a champion of the anti-Latino crowd. According to a source in Congress, Clinton told Bilbray that he would look into a constitutional amendment to repeal the citizenship clause if the congressman came through on fast track. Bilbray also got the administration to bite on another deal: his proposal to make Mexican cars and trucks crossing the US border comply with the strict California emissions standards, a backdoor way to restrict immigrants.

The Bilbray auto emissions deal stands in marked constrast to an agreement between anti-green Republicans and White House lobbyist-for-hire Jason Berman, the CEO of the Recording Industry of America and a former press aide to Senator Birch Bayh. Berman, according to a source in the Senate, ok'd a move by Senator James Inhofe to attach a rider to the fast track bill which prevents the EPA from moving forward with its new clean air standards for at least four years. Inhofe's amendment passed on a voice vote.

Clinton, who loves nothing more than to lambaste the cigarette barons, also cut a deal on tobacco. He bought the vote of several reps from tobacco-growing districts, including Bob Etheridge of North Carolina and Harold Ford of Tennessee, by promising to exempt small tobacco growers from any legal liability as part of the proposed tobacco settlement. The administration also pledged its continued support for tobacco subsidies and said it would take action to curb import of foreign tobacco.

Newt Gingrich scored mighty victories. Republicans won a major concession on Clinton's plans for national standardized testing of public school students. Secretary of Education Richard Riley agreed not to begin field testing in 1998 and to seek congressional approval before beginning national testing in the year 2001, when the Republicans hope to have regained the White House and abolished Riley's department.

Even more startling to many Democrats was the administration's compromise on the contentious subject of census sampling. For the past year, Republicans have waged a fierce attack on the administration's plan to use statistical sampling in the next census, correctly fearing it will lead to the creation of new black and Latino dominated congressional districts. Striking a severe blow to the future electoral prospects of his own party, Clinton agreed to sign legislation that leaves the fate of sampling in the hands of the Congress (allowing an up or down vote on sampling in 1999) and gives Republicans the right to bring challenges against sampling to the Supreme Court using taxpayer funds.

In an effort to appease black members of Congress angered by the cave-in on the census, White House congressional lobbyist John Hilley proposed to add a trade pact for sub-Saharan Africa to the Fast Track bill. This offering, targeted at Rep. Charles Rangel, backfired when several black leaders denounced

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the African trade initiative as little more than a traditional restructuring and austerity program aimed at impoverished African nations.

Some of the deals offered by liberal legislators certainly had merit. Carrie Meek of Florida offered to exchange her vote for an agreement to exempt Haitian immigrants from the harsh guidelines of last year's immigration bill. The administration agreed, but the Republicans balked at that humanitarian gesture. Others wanted a commitment for country-of-origin labels on fruits and vegetables. Rep. Leonard Boswell, an Iowa Democrat, wanted a provision that would make US child labor standards apply to trading partners. The White House agreed to back some of these measures, but US trade rep. Barshevsky told conservatives not to worry, the World Trade Organization would surely strike the two measures down as unfair trade barriers.

As the dealmaking reached a fevered pitch, Rep. Dennis Kucinich went to the floor of the House and began handing out to Republican budget hawks a flyer he had drawn up which pointed out that all the deals on fast track might end up costing so much that some of the limited-benefit tax breaks awarded to favored campaign contributors as part of the 1997 budget deal might have to be rescinded. According to Kucinich's office, his flyer prompted three distraught Republicans to come out against fast track and a dozen others to mob Bill Archer demanding an explanation. Soon two of the more inept members of Congress, Dana Rohrabacher and Van Hilleary, crafted a solution to the Kucinich dilemma. Instead of closing tax loopholes, Rohrabacher and Hilleary convinced the administration to pay for some of the deals by scaling back federal purchases of new computer equipment and by ordering the Department of Energy to offer more surplus uranium for sale on the open market.

The administration told lawmakers who sold their votes they needn't worry about Clinton keeping his word. "Any commitments that we made, we'll continue to pursue," pledged White House spokesman Mike McCurry. "That's just the honest thing to do." ■

Sleight of Hand Leaves Pentagon Unbowed

William Cohen's Fake Fix

On November 9, amid tremendous chest-thumps about cutting the fat out of the Pentagon, Defense Secretary William Cohen unveiled his great reorganization plan. The press promptly hailed it as a bold initiative in cutting costs and promoting efficiency.

The plan calls for the elimination of 1,000 jobs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, cutting a further 28,000 civilian employees from various other defense organizations and the apportioning of their functions to private contractors, further rounds of base closings early in the next millennium and the elimination of old-fashioned paper regulations and forms in favor of the computerized variety.

There is far, far less to all this than meets the eye. Close inspection of the alleged job cuts in the Secretary's office reveals that the baseline for the numbers to be cut is October 1995. Natural attrition has brought the number of those currently employed, in November 1997, to within a hundred or so of the target figure. In other words, almost no positions will be eliminated.

Contracting out such functions as management of the payroll, which the military has managed to perform on its own since 1776, has had the historic effect of actually increasing costs. (The people currently doing the job retire from government service, start collecting their pension and then return to do exactly the same job as private contractors, for which they are handsomely rewarded.)

Base closings are of course expensive, at least in the short run and any that are likely to be shut down under the plan will require especially heavy environmental clean-up costs. A further shift to "paperless offices" and "electronic contracting" of the kind so beloved by Al Gore will almost inevitably engender fraud and theft.

Needless to say, there are no provisions in the plan for cuts in the uniformed military. In fact, as the number of combat units steadily declines, the number of senior officers steadily increases. The ratio of enlisted men to officers in the air force, for example, is now four to one. To command a force now reduced to 85 squadrons, the USAF can call on no less than 295 generals, which as one official points out, means that "we could have a general commanding every squadron and still have 110 left over to lobby Congress".

We are buying a post-cold war military with a cold war budget. Maybe Saddam Hussein realized this as he planned his recent defiance. "In 1990-91 we were just about to fight a half-war with the forces that were supposed to be ready to fight World War III", says one Defense Department official. "Now we've gone far below that."

Instances of a military in deep decay abound. Efforts to deploy air force squadrons to the Middle East require extensive cannibalization of other units, rendering them inoperable should they in turn be required. Plummeting morale among pilots has led to record levels of resignations. The army's problems are equally if not more severe, with large numbers of units effectively immobilized due to lack of spare parts and inadequate training.

Calculating cold war defense budgets in inflation-adjusted dollars, we see that from the early 1950s up to the Soviet collapse they revolved on average around a constant median, although there were sharp increases in the 1960s and 1980s accounted for by Vietnam and the Reagan 'spend up'.

Extrapolating from the underlying level (without Vietnam and Reagan) forward to the present, the figures show that current expenditures are within a few percent of historic rates. Thus, the average spending level from 1972 to 1982—when Boris the Bear was still alive and kicking—was $261 billion (in '97 dollars) while spending for 1997 is $254 billion. Indeed one Pentagon cost specialist points out that, allowing for statistical 'noise' in calculating inflation rates, the amounts are almost exactly the same. ■

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powerful Local 25 in Boston—no friend of TDU—had incurred considerable hostility for promoting himself as the successor to Carey.

By the end of that week, though, as he prepared to appear at the TDU convention in Cleveland, there were signs that Carey was bowing to circumstance. According to a well-known TDU leader west of the Rockies, Carey had, by midweek, begun to talk about fighting for the sake of the union rather than for his personal role as president.

What happens in the months ahead and how labor responds are matters of immense importance for American workers. The campaign against Carey will almost certainly extend to some of the most vigorous leaders in labor: Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO; Gerald McEntee, president of AFSCME; Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union. McEntee and Stern all lead unions in the fastest growing sector of the labor movement; Trumka, who is John Sweeney's right-hand man. Hopes of labor becoming a potent force, with the power to end the de facto wage-freeze of US workers, would be diminished. This is not to say union militancy depends on leaders. It doesn't. But a union in disarray is a less effective fighting force.

If Hoffa Jr. survives investigation of his shady finances and if he wins the race for the Teamster presidency he could do serious damage. There'd be civil war inside the Teamsters, probably a reversal of the union's militant leadership in national labor fights ala NAFTA and fast track. Hoffa Jr. could even try to take the Teamsters out of the AFL-CIO altogether, thus denying the Federation huge financial resources. Or he could stay inside the Federation and make life more difficult for the program of reform of that institution.

All of this would lessen the capacity of organized labor to take offensive action on wages, the right to organize. Already the right's long-term drive to eliminate union money from political elections has been bolstered, as a glance at the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page.

How likely is it that Hoffa Jr. will survive federal scrutiny? He raised $1.8 million in unaccounted funds which, he tells the press, came from cake sales. Mobsters have boasted they raised money for his campaign. The FBI and a federal grand jury have been probing the washing of hundreds of thousands of dollars from Teamster pension funds in a Cayman Island account and then back to a stockbroker who holds a union card in Local 337, headed by Larry Brennan, Hoffa Jr.'s boss. There's more.

But as one reformer put it last week, "It will be very tough to wipe him out, to prove Junior had knowledge. Hoffa's people are smarter at shielding things".

Right now, the election for Teamster presidency is postponed. In all likelihood it will be delayed till next June. On March 31, 1998, the Master Freight Agreement, covering 110,000 Teamster truckers expires. The old strategy had been for Carey to win as big a victory there as against UPS, while Hoffa Jr. whined on the sidelines.

A man many Teamster reformers say they could support is Ken Hall, in charge of the UPS division at the Teamsters, who was the brilliant organizer and negotiator in the victory over UPS. Could a man like Hall, whom Carey is said to favor, win widespread credit in Master Freight negotiations? Many Teamsters say that members in the freight section follow national elections with much greater attention than anyone else, because UPS and Master Freight Agreements are bargained nationally. So too do members in the warehouse division, headed by Tom Leedham, from Portland, Oregon, another reformer well admired by Teamsters. But warehouse is smaller, and Leedham's base in Oregon is not substantial.

If Hoffa Jr. runs, Cashman would have less room to maneuver. With Hoffa out, Cashman could proceed to launch his 'unity' slate to greater effect, though many reformers see him as an opportunist and old-style autocrat within his Local, whose newsletter carries almost as many photographs of Cashman on its pages as did party papers of Eastern bloc leaders in the days of the Soviet Union.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union, one of the most tenacious and admirable long-term enterprises in labor, now faces the test: can it discipline its own forces and build the coalitions necessary to prevail in the effort to build a militant, democratic union, one that can assert its democratic rights against government control? It's one of the biggest questions on the American political agenda today. ■

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JOURNALISM FOR GROWN UPS

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